

The cod-liver oil has been much used by M. Bureaud Riofrey in consumption, and he states that he was the first to employ it for this disease in London. His experience, therefore, would perhaps have enabled him to judge of the degree of utility which this agent possesses; hence we regret to find that he limits himself to an explanation of the principle upon which, in his opinion, it acts as a remedy in phthisis, and dismisses the subject with the reflection that, in the proper alimentation of consumptive patients, "*il-y-a toute une science à créer.*" It is worthy of remark, however, that he finds in the fatty degeneration of the liver, so common in pulmonary phthisis, support for the doctrine of the antagonism of tubercle and fat. It is plain, therefore, that this antagonism is understood to be chiefly local, or, in other words, that, in an organ containing a good deal of fat, tubercle will not make its appearance. Now this may be true or it may not; the absence of tubercle from the fatty liver is certainly no proof of it, for the substance of this organ is but seldom the seat of tubercle in any case; but it is difficult to perceive what bearing this fact can have upon the treatment of phthisis, for, however successful may be our attempts to fatten phthisical patients, the lungs, it is well known, never become the receptacle of the adipose tissue. A deposit of fat in the pulmonary structure would be an event very much to be deplored.

We will close this account of M. Bureaud Riofrey's work with its concluding passage, which should be attentively read by all who are disposed to be skeptical on the subject of the curability of consumption.

"A Swiss regiment, garrisoned in Holland, was attacked, almost epidemically, with nostalgia. This nostalgia changed quickly into phthisis. The mass of physicians held then, as now, that phthisis was incurable, and that there was nothing to be done. The unhappy Swiss, thus abandoned to themselves, were about to perish in the hospital. The regiment was decimated. The council assembled, and one physician, more philosophical than his colleagues, advised the return into Switzerland of all those home-sick patients attacked with symptoms of phthisis. His advice was followed.

"Wonderful and most intelligible fact for those who understand the power of the mind over the body! All the symptoms of this nostalgic phthisis became modified during the journey, and gradually disappeared as the soldiers approached their homes, so that almost all of them, even those who had been declared *phthisical* on their leaving Holland, arrived cured in their cottages!!

"With such facts before him, I demand of every impartial man, dare any one say that phthisis is incurable?" M. S.

ART. XVIII.—*Report of the Joint Special Committee of the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts, to which was referred the Memorials of the Massachusetts Medical Society, and the American Statistical Association, with various other Petitions in favour of a Sanitary Survey of the State.* Boston, 1849: 8vo. pp. 39.

In this public document, the great importance of the sanitary survey of the State is acknowledged, and the subject is recommended to the attentive consideration of the legislature. The intimate connection subsisting between this and the registration of births, marriages, and deaths, already provided for by law, is referred to; the facts and illustrations supplied through the last named measures serving as a kind of base-line for the sanitary survey. Considering the points connected with the subject as amply treated of, and their advantages explained, in the communications made to the legislature by the Medical Society and the Statistical Association, the committee present these as a part of their report, which is closed with the following resolutions. These we present for the purpose of showing how the novel measure is proposed to be carried out.

"Resolved, that his excellency the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the council, is hereby authorized to appoint three persons to be commissioners, to prepare and report to the next legislature a plan for the

sanitary survey of the State, embracing a statement of such facts and suggestions as they may think proper, to illustrate the subject. The commissioners shall be paid, for the time actually spent in the discharge of their duty, and for their necessary travel, the same compensation that is paid to the legislature; and also for blanks and circulars used, and for postage and other necessary expenses paid, in said commission; and a sum not exceeding fifty dollars, to purchase books on the subject; provided, however, that said books shall be considered the property of the State, and shall be deposited in the State library, when the commission shall be dissolved. And the governor and council are hereby authorized to audit the accounts of said commissioners, and to draw a warrant on the treasury therefor."

Such are the terms of this act, the introduction and passage of which confer upon Massachusetts the highest honor, by the manifestation it affords of advanced intelligence and laudable zeal for all things connected with the health and welfare of her population, whether gathered in towns or scattered among the hills and valleys.

It is but proper to give the credit of priority in this movement to the American Statistical Association, the origin and centre of which is Boston. The committee appointed by this Association in October, 1847, to prepare a memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts on the subject of a sanitary survey of the State, reported through its chairman, Dr. E. Jarvis, a memorial about the time that another upon the same subject was presented by the Massachusetts Medical Society.

Both these documents afford valuable information in regard to matters connected with public hygiene and results furnished by vital statistics. No one who reflects properly upon the subject can doubt that the preservation and extension of public health, and everything tending to improve the physical condition of the people, especially the labouring population, whose industry is the basis of prosperity, are fit matters for state legislation. Every circumstance tending to diminish strength, induce sickness, and shorten life, should, if possible, be ascertained and made known, together with those calculated to prevent sickness, promote longevity, and favour an increase of human comfort and power.

The task has been commenced in England, Scotland, and France, with most favourable results—the sanitary surveys there accomplished, under public authority, having already developed facts of the deepest interest and most important bearing. Singular and almost incredible differences have been shown to exist in the proportions of health and longevity among people in various places and different conditions of life.

The discovery of the existence of malign influences has already led to the application of measures for their removal, by the opening of streets, improved drainage, &c. &c., and this has been attended with the most happy results in restoring health to many sickly localities.

Of the sickness which desolates certain communities and sections of country, a much larger amount than has been generally supposed has been found to originate from removable causes; and the health commissioners have, in their extensive reports, not only pointed out the most common sources of sickness, and early death, but laid down the means by which these evils may be removed and human life prolonged.

In regard to the ordinary proportions of the sick and well, the most approved English authorities state that, for every death, there are two constantly sick; that is to say, for every death there are seven hundred and thirty days of sickness. This is regarded the average proportion when the estimate is made to include all classes.

The losses sustained from the suspension of profitable labour by sickness are far greater than any one can imagine who has not entered into a close estimate of the results. In the single State of Massachusetts, small as it is, an estimate made exhibits an annual loss to the commonwealth of \$62,000,000 to \$93,000,000, by the premature death of persons over fifteen years of age! Such views show the immense importance attached to the subject, when severed from all considerations of philanthropy, and viewed merely with the

consideration of man as a mere produce and agent of domestic or political economy.

It is well observed that life, whether in the vegetable or animal forms, is not fixed and unalterable in quantity. It may be greater, or it may be less, according to certain conditions fulfilled or neglected. By regulating the circumstances, amidst which life is to be sustained, the vitality of any individual or class of beings can be very materially enlarged or prolonged. This is surely an object most worthy of attainment, and we doubt not that the subject will soon draw more general attention, in other parts of the Union, than is at present bestowed upon it.

G. E.

ART. XIX.—*An Essay on Intestinal Auscultation*. By CHARLES HOOKER, M.D., Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in Yale College. Read at the Annual New Haven County Meeting of the Connecticut Medical Society, April 8, 1847. (Republished from the "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.") Boston, 1849: 8vo. pp. 14.

WHETHER the same important results, in determining the diagnosis of the several morbid conditions of the abdominal organs, are to be acquired from the application of auscultation to this region, as have been derived from it in the investigation of the diseases of the thoracic viscera, is very doubtful. How far it may aid us is, however, a legitimate subject for future observation, and the author of the present essay deserves the thanks of the medical profession for directing attention to it, and for the record of his own experience as to its value.

Whatever may be the importance which future experience may confer upon the practice of intestinal auscultation, the first step in determining its value is to institute a series of accurate observations in relation to the sounds of the abdomen in the various conditions of the intestinal canal during a state of health. For, until these are positively ascertained and determined, it will be impossible to distinguish and classify those produced by disease.

We have read with great interest the remarks of Dr. Hooker, and duly appreciate his contributions to this new source of diagnosis. If not in themselves calculated to throw a new light upon the diseases of the alimentary canal, they will at least call attention to the subject, and be the means, perhaps, of eliciting, hereafter, more important results.

"It is now," remarks Dr. Hooker, "more than twenty years since I have habitually attended to the sounds produced in the abdomen in various diseases; and, in the early stage of my investigation, I indulged the hope that, in disorders of the intestinal canal, auscultation might gain nearly the same distinctness and precision that it had already acquired in relation to thoracic diseases. Though I long ago relinquished this sanguine expectation, continued observation has confirmed my opinion of the importance of the subject, and has enabled me to discover practical indications, which I regard as of great value."

From a consideration of the structure of the thoracic cavity, compared with that of the abdomen, as well as from the difference of the arrangement and functions of the organs belonging to each, we should have inferred, *à priori*, what Dr. Hooker has learned from experience, that the value of the indications derived from auscultation could not be as certain and valuable in its application to the exploration of the one as they have proved in relation to the other.

According to Dr. H., "when the ear is applied to the abdominal parietes of a healthy subject, there is heard an almost constant succession of sounds produced by the motion of the contents of the intestinal canal. These sounds are varied by many causes, such as the quickness, regularity, and other variations of the peristaltic action, the degree of fulness of the intestines, the proportions of the gaseous and other contents, the fluidity of the liquid contents, &c. The sounds, thus varying with the causes of their production, afford indication of these several causes, and they thus become signs of actions and conditions of